



Lagoites invade Aruba!!

The 11th Reunion of the Lago School Alumni brings over 300 to the island

The Aruba Resort, Spa & Casino is host to former students and their families of the Lago Heights School, which is now known as the International School of Aruba. Reunion organizer Elvira South, a graduate of the school, here with her husband Dick, who did a stint as an engineer at the refinery, explained that not only hundreds that grew up on the island, but their families have gathered for a week of nostalgia and good times on the island they loved so much in their youth.

The “Lagoites” hail from all over the U.S. from the East to the West coast, but despite the distance could not miss this opportunity to return to Aruba, something they do every three years. They encompass the graduating classes from the years 1939 to 1976, classes that graduated before Lago left the island. They are as diverse a group as can be imagined, some on their own, while others like Victor Lopez are here with a family of twelve, made up of three generations. Victor co-authored with his father James a series of books titled “The Lago Colony Legend; Our Stories,” which is available in local bookstores. Victor is also the third generation in his family to have made a life in Aruba, his grandfather Louis was one of the first workers at the refinery when in opening in the late twenties.

Such are the stories of the “Lagoites”; memories of growing up in Aruba and interacting with the “wonderful people of this island,” according to Lee Huehey of Lancaster, Pennsylvania, Class of '64. Unanimously they acknowledge their love of Aruba and consider these reunions to be “coming home.” The reunions, begun in 1973 by Jim Downey, who came to work at the refinery many years ago and has never left, have grown in numbers over the years, and though Elvira sadly acknowledged that time is taking its toll on their numbers, reunion 2006 is one of the largest ever held. This year one of their number will have her ashes spread in the sea during a ceremony conducted by her family, who are obeying her last wishes.

Any evening Frank and Kathy Benetti can be found in the main lobby of the resort displaying a selection of beautiful watercolors by artist Jane E. H. Getty that are her memories of the years she spent as a “Lagoite,” growing up in Aruba. They are beautifully rendered, and definitely worth a look. Jane, to her regret could not attend this year, but wanted to share her inspiration with the other alumni of the island. The News welcomes back the “Lagoites” to Aruba, may you enjoy “coming home” for many more years!